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ABSTRACT

Leadership is a key ingredient in school-to-work system building. School-to-work systems represent an attempt to create a new administrative structure that integrates many formerly disparate programs, partners, and agencies and an attempt to change traditional institutions and views of education in profound ways. To accomplish those goals, school-to-work system executives must possess the skills of both inspirational leaders and accomplished managers. School-to-work leaders must foster an atmosphere conducive to collaboration by encouraging trust, flexibility, and acceptance of change and making collaboration a win-win situation for everyone involved. Many effective school-to-work executives create structures and processes designed to make empowerment a practice as well as a principle. Successful executives develop a shared vision and comprehensive strategy for their reform effort. They must also possess a willingness to experiment, thorough understanding of change, and commitment to learning. Examples of effective leadership in school-to-work systems may be seen in the following organizations/programs: Boston Private Industry Council in Massachusetts; East San Gabriel Valley Regional Occupational Program in West Covina, California; and Kalamazoo Country Education for Employment Program in Kalamazoo, Michigan. (Contains 13 references and an annotated list of 13 resource organizations. (MN)

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★RESOURCE BULLETIN

APRIL 1997

Leading the School-to-Work Transition

Leadership is a key ingredient in school-to-work system-building. School-to-work systems represent both an attempt to create a new administrative structure that integrates many formerly disparate programs, partners, and agencies, and an attempt to change traditional institutions and views of education in profound ways. Accomplishing these major purposes requires the executives of school-to-work systems to exercise the skills of both an inspirational leader and an accomplished manager.

The leadership style of successful school-to-work executives bears little resemblance to traditional models that depend on authority or position to see that the work of the organization is accomplished. For many school systems, this is a radical departure from the norm. School-to-work executives may blend ideas drawn from contemporary analyses of leadership in business, which view leadership in terms such as: relationships, accountability, empowerment, facilitation of change, and coaching of staff. Effective school-to-work leadership is designed to operate in climates of change and diversity, typical of school-to-work reform and increasingly typical of contemporary organizations and systems.

Across the United States, in communities where school-to-work systems are taking hold, those involved usually identify one or more formal leaders--superintendents, principals, business partners, or others--as having provided the leadership that made reform possible. This bulletin explores six qualities necessary in a school-to-work leader: collaboration, empowerment, vision, willingness to experiment, thorough understanding of change, and commitment to learning. At the end of the bulletin is a list of resources that further explore the concept of leadership in school-to-work systems.

Elements of Leadership

Collaboration. By definition, school-to-work requires the engagement of education, business, labor, youth, parents, and community-based organizations. The leaders of these groups, together with managers, employees, teachers, and students, must be brought into the effort. Executives of school-to-work systems successfully market the concept of school-to-work transition to these partners, work with them to create agreement on a common agenda, and share resources in order to carry out that agenda. They ensure that representatives of these sectors have vehicles that inform, engage, and welcome their contributions to the reform. They take care to sustain both processes of collaboration and systems to support collaboration, tending both to relationships and to logistics such as the timely preparation of agendas and minutes. Above all, these executives foster an atmosphere conducive to collaboration by encouraging trust, flexibility, and acceptance of change. They do not expect their partners to contribute out of altruism alone; instead, they look for mutual benefits and make the collaboration a win-win situation for everyone involved.

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Empowerment. Many effective school-to-work executives extend the principles of collaboration to working relationships within their own staff. These executives are notable for not simply a willingness, but a sincere commitment to empowering others throughout the system to assume leadership. They share authority rather than hoard it, and they also share successes and rewards. They provide staff members the autonomy to innovate, take risks, and pursue directions of their own devising without the administration getting in their way. Some systems have empowered students themselves and discovered that student leadership can mean both better programs and students who are more motivated, mature, and eager to learn.

In addition, these executives create structures and processes designed to make empowerment a practice as well as a principle. The structures are often horizontal and team-based rather than hierarchical. Management authority is shared by small teams operating throughout the system: advisory committees, teams of teachers, student teams, etc. For example, in East San Gabriel and Kalamazoo (discussed under "Effective Practices" below), the top executives operate with a team of three to six senior administrators, who are accountable to the executive but operate with great independence.

This approach requires that the atmosphere of the organization, from the top down, be mutually respectful, team-based, competitive but friendly, and supportive of bold ideas. The organizational culture must also be flexible and adaptable, genuinely conducive to individuals taking on responsibility and authority. Executives give staff members time to develop new ideas, professional development to acquire new skills, and the latitude to make mistakes. They also encourage those who had limited power under the old system to make contributions, and persuade former power brokers to share power in the new system. When implemented, the result is that many people, at various levels of the system, are regarded as leaders: instructors, counselors, advisory committee members, secretaries, parents, and, indeed, students. The benefits are obvious. Empowered staff are motivated and more willing to put in extra time and effort; they often offer insights that executives might overlook. Ultimately, any systemic reform exclusively dependent upon a single leader is unlikely to survive beyond the tenure of that leader.

Vision. Mobilizing people requires an organizing vision, for without a vision, a collaborative and empowering style only invites chaos. Executives of school-to-work systems develop a shared vision and comprehensive strategy for the reform, enlisting the support and ownership of all stakeholders within the system, the network of partnerships, and the larger community. They publicly articulate a vision of school-to-work that carries an expanded sense of the future, conviction about the reform's importance, and commitment to its realization. Because organizational change can be confusing, these leaders recognize that it is their responsibility to make sure the vision of the reform is clear both within the organization and in the larger community. As advocates, they explain what school-to-work is and what it can mean, often using research as a tool for building and communicating the vision. They bring together all the important parties and sell the reform. Leaders who communicate vision, commitment, and ability also inspire dedication to the system and its purposes.

Willingness to Experiment. Visionaries are creative thinkers who look to what could be, rather than to what is. They deliberately step outside of the "box" of traditional approaches to seek new resources, ideas, and advice. Faced with obstacles to change, they try things that have not been tried before, responding with flexibility and creativity and looking for the same from their staff. They consistently look beyond the traditional boundaries of the school system for ideas, connections, and funds. Embracing the new is a risk

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for leaders, who will bear the responsibility for justifying the change and sustaining the effort through inevitable failures and mistakes.

School-to-work leaders must also combine an entrepreneurial approach with accountability and risk-management. Building a school-to-work system requires thinking outside of traditional "program" boxes to reallocate existing resources, in addition to seeking additional funding sources. Under the National School-to-Work Opportunities Act, executives are encouraged to take an aggressive approach to grantsmanship, investigate waiver possibilities, broker one resource to secure another, and use federal resources as the leverage capital they are intended to be.

Understanding and Facilitating Change. School-to-work leaders also display a deep understanding of change processes and the impact of change on people. They set high standards for their staff members, students, and partners, but they also create an atmosphere of support that allows the reform to evolve. They recognize and accept that change requires time and the participation of all parties. They provide training and support in areas such as communication, team-building, strategic planning, and collaboration, so that their staff members are equipped with the skills necessary to help build a comprehensive school-to-work system.

Commitment to Learning. These school-to-work executives are committed to learning as an essential operating principle of their organizations. This attribute is often expressed through a commitment to research and to professional development, for themselves and for their staff members. These executives rely on research for three primary purposes: to provide a foundation for a program or system model; to assess the local labor market and the economy; and to measure changes in student outcomes--specifically how their students perform in school and their graduates fare in the worlds of work and postsecondary education. They draw upon existing research, conduct their own, or commission new research. Using research in these ways has secondary benefits, as the findings justify the school-to-work reform, affirm to the staff the importance of their work, leverage additional resources, and provide feedback to improve and refine the reform.

For professional development to prove effective, the executive of a system must make it a priority. Like so many aspects of school-to-work, professional development can conflict with standard school and work schedules, logistics, and assumptions. Models for professional development vary, but many include skill-based workshops, worksite supervisor training, or structured interaction between educators and employers. In some cases, professional development is an implicit element of the empowering leader's assumptions about other school-to-work partners and staff members. The executive regards instructors, employees, and other partners as professionals whose development is both their own and the system's responsibility.

Effective Practices

East San Gabriel Valley Regional Occupational Program, East San Gabriel, California. The Regional Occupational Program (ROP) system in California provides occupational training on a regional basis to high schools and to adults, and usually represents the joining together of two or more school districts for this purpose. The East San Gabriel Valley Regional Occupational Program (ESGVROP) serves constituents 16 years and older from six unified school districts that operate a total of

17 high schools and three adult continuation schools in the central and eastern areas of Los Angeles County.

Credited with an empowering leadership style, the superintendent of the ESGVROP delegates administrative authority to a team of coordinators. The ESGVROP is characterized by a cooperative, team-based, horizontally-managed staff structure. The superintendent and her staff foster an atmosphere conducive to collaboration by encouraging trust, flexibility, and acceptance of change among the ROP's many partners and at all levels of the staff. Their attention to the details of management has produced systems of communication and transportation capable of tracking and serving individual students in placements across greater Los Angeles.

ESGVROP leaders extend their collaborative working style to external partners as well. They approach their partners--including area businesses, service agencies, and community-based organizations--as customers who face individual situations and needs. ROP leaders present a customized picture of what school-to-work can offer each organization, as well as offering a larger vision of what a coordinated school-to-work system is and how it can impact the community.

In addition, the ROP's leadership has a strong commitment to learning and places a high value on research. They depend on labor market surveys and build programs based on their findings. They insist on continual curriculum review to ensure that the programs are state-of-the-art and responsive to labor market trends.

Education for Employment, Kalamazoo County, Michigan. School-to-work in Kalamazoo Valley is a system developed over time to sustain Education for Employment's (EFE) basic purposes: to provide career-technical education for all students; to involve business and industry as well as educators; and to engage postsecondary as well as secondary educational institutions. People involved in EFE feel that much of the system's success is due to the quality of the system's leaders: their competence, commitment, vision, strategic thinking, collaborative style, knowledge, and political savvy. EFE leaders are well-connected to the world of education beyond the county through active leadership in professional organizations, networking in state political circles, and relationships with national organizations. The top administrators, specifically the assistant superintendent and the area vocational directors, are often singled out by those involved for their vision and empowering leadership style. As a business advisory committee chair pointed out, "The administrators get out of the way and let great things happen."

The commitment to nurturing leadership throughout the EFE system is notable, including the deliberate hiring and appointment of individuals with leadership qualities, and the organizing of a system whose structures and processes empower and support leaders throughout the EFE. The EFE leaders have developed an organizational culture that rewards creativity, initiative, teamwork, and quality. The tone is set from the top of mutual respect, teamwork, leadership, friendly competition, bold ideas, and visionary goals. The result is that many people throughout the system are regarded as leaders.

The **Boston Private Industry Council** (PIC) is a business-led alliance of executives, educators, labor and community leaders, and government officials leading a citywide effort to build a school-to-work system for all young people. Since 1982, the PIC has convened the Boston Compact, providing Boston's leadership community the opportunity to work together to improve education and employment opportunities for all students. The Compact, an agreement among educators, business, labor, community, and

government, states in clear, measurable terms the goals for Boston's youth--access to employment and higher education; commitment to innovation at the school level; high standards; comprehensive curriculum and new assessment methods; training and professional development; support for parents and families; and community learning centers.

As the area's Regional Employment Board, the PIC facilitates all workforce development and school-to-work efforts in Boston. This comprehensive governance approach provides opportunities for collaboration, innovative policies, and resource allocation strategies, and is instrumental in bringing together different programs and services to form a coherent system. The school-to-career advisory committee is a subcommittee of the PIC and is co-chaired by a business leader and the superintendent of Boston Public Schools. The PIC staff works directly with employers, from the CEO to human resource administrators and staff; and from the superintendent of schools to high school principals, faculty, and students. The PIC is using labor market information to organize over 700 employers by industry cluster and is recruiting 1,000 additional employers to bring school-to-work to scale in Boston.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOPIC, CONSULT THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

Effective Practices

Boston Private Industry Council: Neil Sullivan, Director, Boston Private Industry Council, 2 Oliver Street, Boston, MA 02109 ★ (617) 423-3755.

East San Gabriel Valley Regional Occupational Program: Dr. Laurel Adler, Superintendent, East San Gabriel Valley Regional Occupational Program, 1024 West Workman Avenue, West Covina, CA 91790 ★ (818) 960-3625.

Kalamazoo County's Education for Employment Program: Irv Cumming, Assistant Superintendent for Vocational Education, Kalamazoo Valley I.S.D., 1819 East Milham Road, Kalamazoo, MI 49002 ★ (616) 381-4620.

Organizations

The Accelerated Schools Project. The Accelerated Schools Project is a comprehensive approach to school change, designed to improve schooling for children in "at-risk" situations. The key component of the project is a process that encourages the school community and school leaders to work in a collaborative and inclusive effort to: 1) take stock of the school's present status, 2) forge a vision of an ideal school, and 3) work together to bridge gaps between the two. Each of the project's more than 700 schools is supported by one of several hundred trained "coaches" or by one of 10 accelerated schools satellite centers located at universities, state departments of education, and district offices nationwide. CERAS 109, School of Education, Stanford University, Stanford, CA 94305-3084 ★ (415) 725-1676.

The California School Leadership Academy (CSLA) helps practicing administrators and teachers in leadership positions strengthen their instructional leadership skills and focus their actions on issues and strategies critical to increasing the achievement of all students. To meet this mission, CSLA provides professional development opportunities for public school principals, teachers in leadership positions, and

superintendents. In addition, CSLA has developed curriculum resources that focus on actions for teaching and learning in classrooms from kindergarten through 12th grade. 313 West Winton Avenue, Suite 373, Hayward, CA 94544 ★ (510) 887-8808.

Center for Creative Leadership (CCL). CCL is an international nonprofit educational institution that encourages and develops creative leadership and effective management processes. This mission is accomplished through research, training, and publications, with an emphasis on the widespread, innovative applications of the behavioral sciences to the challenges facing leaders. Through its research, the Center is developing models of managerial practice, and through its educational programs, the Center is applying these models as guides for assessment and development. One Leadership Place, P.O. Box 26300, Greensboro, NC 27438-6300 ★ (919) 288-7210 ★ info@leaders.ccl.org.

Center for Leadership in School Reform (CLSR). CLSR provides strategic consultation, technical assistance, training, and support to school district leaders. Its services are aimed at: enhancing the capacity of school districts to support and sustain reform at the building and classroom levels; redesigning schools so that they are more clearly focused on providing quality work for children; helping teachers, parents, and others who work in schools and classrooms to better understand the characteristics of quality work for students; and ensuring that teachers have the tools and support they need to design and deliver the highest-quality work to students. 950 Breckenridge Lane, Suite 200, Louisville, KY 40207 ★ (502) 895-1942.

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nationwide, nonprofit, membership organization that responds to and provides leadership on a broad range of education issues. CCSSO is comprised of the public officials who head elementary and secondary departments of public education in the states, five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions, the District of Columbia, and the Department of Defense Education Activity. The Council's role is to work for systemic change and school reform for improved student results. One Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-1431 ★ 202-408-5505.

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management (ERIC). ERIC responds to requests for information and produces publications on current research, programs, and practices pertaining to leadership and educational management. ERIC also collects, abstracts, and indexes educational management materials for its database, and offers assistance with customized searches of its materials and database. 5207 University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Room 100, Eugene, OR 94703-5207 ★ (503) 346-5044 ★ askeric@ericir.syr.edu ★ http://ericir.syr.edu/index.html.

Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL). IEL seeks to improve educational opportunities and results for children and youth by developing and supporting leaders who work together. IEL has created a School-to-Work Learning Consortium comprised of individuals and organizations with a wide range of in-depth expertise in key categories of school-to-work implementation. 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036 ★ (202) 822-8405.

Jobs for the Future (JFF) is a national non-profit organization that conducts research, provides technical assistance, and proposes policy innovation on the inter-related issues of work and learning. JFF's goal is to enhance economic security and access to opportunity for all individuals by strengthening the transitions and linkages between work and learning. JFF provides a broad range of assistance, ranging from tailored, in-depth coaching for one person to working with a dozen members of a state team over several months to JFF's annual three-day conference, the National Leadership Forum on School-to-Career Transition. One Bowdoin Square, Boston, MA 02114 ★ (617) 742-5995 ★ jff@jff.org.

National Employer Leadership Council (NELC). The NELC is a coalition of CEOs from a diverse group of private sector companies with a shared vision for the nation's workforce. The mission of the Council is to enhance the quality of the nation's workforce and to improve the productivity and competitiveness of American business through work-based learning opportunities for all students. To accomplish this, the NELC hopes to energize and mobilize the business community around school-to-work in collaboration with other stakeholders. 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036 ★ (202) 822-8027 ★ http://www.nelc.org/.

National Worksite Supervisor Development Institute (NWSDI) is a collaboration of Maine's Center for Career Development, Siemens Corporation, Jobs for the Future, and the Maine Technical College System. NWSDI was created to develop and deliver a progressive series of training sessions for the individuals in worksites who supervise students in school-to-work initiatives. Center for Career Development, Southern Maine Community College, Fort Road, South Portland, ME 04106 ★ (207) 767-5210.

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) is a nonprofit organization that serves 23,000 public and private schools and their communities. NCREL carries out its work through five "learning centers" that focus on improved teaching and learning, school and community development, and research assistance to educators. Much of NCREL's work has involved research and development in the area of school leadership. 1900 Spring Road, Suite 300, Oak Brook, IL 60521 ★ (708) 571-4700 ★ info@ncrel.org ★ http://www.ncrel.org/ncrel/sdrs/pathways.htm.

Program for School Improvement (PSI) is dedicated to improving public education through promoting the school as a professional, democratic workplace where shared governance and action research are used to plan and implement instructional improvement initiatives. PSI also operates the League of Professional Schools, a school-based improvement program in which school personnel learn how to set their own goals, as well as how to initiate and implement school-wide instructional improvements. 124 Aderhold Hall, The University of Georgia, Athens, GA 30602 ★ (706) 542-2516.

U.S. Department of Education (USDOEd). The mission of the USDOEd is to ensure equal access to education and to promote educational excellence throughout the nation. The Department offers many publications that focus on leadership in school settings (e.g., "The Role of Leadership in Sustaining School Reform: Voices from the Field"). Many of these publications are available on-line at the Department's homepage. U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202 ★ http://www.ed.gov/index.html.

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Journals

Educational Leadership is the official publication of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. It is published eight times a year, focusing on current educational trends, including leadership issues. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1250 North Pitt Street, Alexandria, VA 22314-1453.

Phi Delta Kappan, published monthly, is a source of information on current issues in education, including articles about leading education reform. Phi Delta Kappa, Inc., 408 N. Union, P.O. Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402.

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